

Title: **Assessing Natural Resource Values Using the Damage Schedule Approach: Fishing and Other Resource Uses of the Maya People in Quintana Roo, Mexico**

Authors: Ana Minerva Arce Ibarra, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur (Mexico)
Ratana Chuenpagdee (Canada)
Tony Charles, St Mary's Univ. (Canada)
Ana Cima-Velázquez, Community of Dzúlá (Mexico)

Abstract: The Maya of Mexico and Central America pursue multiple livelihood approaches, relying primarily on natural resources obtained from the rainforest. Fishing in the many water bodies of the region is one among many livelihood opportunities, but its relative importance has not been assessed previously. Indeed, there remains an overall lack of knowledge among scientists, development agencies and decision-makers of the Maya peoples priorities regarding present and future use of local resources. This study sought to add to the knowledge base, through an assessment of the relative values that indigenous people place on the various natural resources used for their livelihoods, within the Mayan Zone in Quintana Roo, Mexico. The damage schedule approach was employed as a non-monetary method to elicit the values that the Maya people place on seven resources, associated with their livelihood activities i.e., soils, woodsticks, trees, fish, zapote, animals and bees. The method focuses on pairwise comparison of potential resource losses. Three groups of people in the community (ejidatarios [land owners], non-ejidatarios and women) were selected to undertake the valuation exercise. The results show that the most valuable resource for all three groups was soils (to undertake slash-and-burn shifting agriculture) and the least valuable was fish. Rank correlation results show that the three community groups were similar in their rankings. Community consultations undertaken to obtain feedback from participants confirmed the study results. Incorporating findings such as these in the decision-making process would likely lead to more locally-sensitive development policies, and livelihood support programs suited to Mayan lifestyle and values.